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Paradoxical Leadership: The Rise and Fall of Richard M. Nixon

Andrew P. Langins
Augsburg College

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Andrew P. Langins

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Andrew P. Langins

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ABSTRACT

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This case study analyzes the leadership of the 37th president of the United States, Richard Nixon. Nixon was elected during a time of uncertainty and turmoil in America. He assumed a goal-oriented transactional/ transformational style of leadership and his first term pragmatic domestic policies had considerable success. For example, despite a Congress controlled by the opposition, Nixon provided massive funding to the arts, established the Environmental Protection Agency, and expanded affirmative action. In foreign affairs he was the first U.S. president to visit communist China and the Soviet Union.

The key obstacle for Nixon's presidency was the Vietnam War. Ultimately his criminal behavior in Watergate led to his resignation and his aspirations were defeated by weakness of character.

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this case study is to explore and analyze the leadership style of Richard M. Nixon, thirty-seventh President of the United States. Richard Nixon possessed transactional/transformational leadership characteristics as described by Max Weber in 1949 and further researched by James MacGregor Burns in his book *Leadership* (1978). He displayed a pragmatic, opportunistic style within a transactional/ transformational leadership model. Nixon employed the transactional leadership model of motivating people by reward and punishment in order to achieve his domestic policy reforms. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, "change the realities of [their] particular world to more nearly conform to [their] values and ideals" (Covey, 1991, p.285). As Nixon progressed thru his career the transformation from Transactional to Transformational style became more apparent as he attempted to bring America out of the Vietnam War, to end confrontation, and strive for an era of negotiation.

This analysis will discuss the implications of Nixon's leadership style change as it affected the man and his career.

LITURATURE REVIEW

In the twentieth century no other leader personified the transactional/ transformational leadership model with as much complexity and dichotomy as Richard M. Nixon. Aitken (1996) characterized Nixon as "the contrast between darkness and light' (1). The author stated, "[Nixon's] private virtues, considerable though they were, sometimes conflicted with early pressures of his public career" (2). He felt that Nixon was unfairly treated as a wicked person by the methods he used to rapidly ascend in public life. Aitken qualified his statement by quoting Dwight Eisenhower's words when speaking of the Alger Hiss case in 1951: "The thing that surprised me most was that you not only got Hiss, but you got him fairly" (2). Nixon was a good transactional leader who carried out the letter of the law in the Hiss case as well as the will of his political party. Nixon's use of offensive political rhetoric to make a point, however, often caused ambivalence and distancing of his peers.

"Living in the arena of presidential politics and the presidency brought changes in Nixon's character" (Aitken, 1996, p. 4). Nixon felt justified with his political ethic of an "unscrupulous player of hard ball" (Aitken, 1996,

p.4). He was affected by watching "the deteriorating standards of the presidency during the 1960's. . . [and decided] the way the game's gotta be played" (Aitken, 1996, p.4). Aitken stated, "Nixon had good instincts when he spoke as president-elect of the need to 'bring us together'" (4). As President, Nixon played a transformational leadership role, developing domestic and foreign policies. The President could not bring the country together, however. "[Nixon had] the right strategy but [he] was the wrong man to make it work" (Aitken, 1996, p.4). The President allowed himself to be corrupted by the power of his office. Instead of allowing his basic system of values to work for him, Nixon used bad judgment and took reckless gambles to achieve his ends. "[Nixon] came to believe that the President was impregnable under the law" (Aitken, 1996, p.5).

In the final analysis, Aitken felt that Nixon's leadership was too harshly criticized in light of his strong virtues of "international idealism and his lifelong dedication to racial equality" (Aitken, 1996, p.5).

A study by Béland and Waddan (2006) discussed the difficulties of pre-emptive leadership. Nixon was "elected on the back of short term public disapproval of the previous regime that reversed the underlying ideological

and political currents" (p.65). Under difficult circumstances, with only a limited mandate, Nixon tried to work with the Republican Party. According to (Kotlowski, 2001, p. 3), he was "persu[ing] a strategy of 'moderation' in order 'to unify the GOP' as it was clear that the 'party would never gain majority status if either its liberal or conservative wing was 'sliced off'" (as cited in Béland and Waddan, 2006, p.70). Nixon's work to unify his party, in order to bring about reforms, had limited success. The President's Family Assistance Plan alienated conservatives who feared "undermining work ethics and traditional family values" (Béland and Waddan, 2006, p. 73). The plan passed in the House, but was stopped in the Senate Finance Committee. Nixon's creative social legislation did not pass because it was outside the traditional ideological boundaries. Nixon is remembered for the scandals, but must also be credited with visionary transformational leadership.

Mazlish (1970) stated, "Nixon defines a leader as one able to act in a crisis" (88). Nixon also stressed, "a leader without a crisis is almost a contradiction in terms" (88). Richard Nixon created crisis to succeed in securing a Congressional and Senate seat. He felt that "crisis enhances a leader in the eyes of his followers" (88). For

most encounters he faced, Nixon prepared well but faced the agony of indecision: "whether or not [to] release the aggressive impulse" (90). After the fight or release of aggression, "let down, guilt, and self justification followed" (90). Nixon rose rapidly to the Presidency by following this crisis pattern.

Richard Nixon's leadership by crisis helped to advance his early political career, serving him well, but clouded his judgment as President, when making decisions and solving problems required the advice of others.

The study by McAndrews (1998) discussed Richard Nixon's stand on school desegregation between the early 1950's and 1970's when Nixon was Vice President, and President. Nixon's views can be traced to his mother's belief in equality between races. The President, who attended Duke University in the Jim Crow South, committed himself to one nation. As Vice President he endorsed the Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954, lobbied hard for the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and 1960, and spearheaded the Eisenhower Administration's effort to eliminate discrimination in the issuance of government contracts (p. 192).

After winning the 1968 Presidential election, Nixon began a "calculated waffl[ing]" (p.194) on desegregation

due to a mixture of principle and political concerns. According to McAndrews, Nixon was not willing to antagonize people of the South, but also stood by the constitutional mandate of racial desegregation.

As vice president, Nixon took his role as transactional leader seriously, making firm decisions. As President, he acted more in the role of a political tactician or pragmatist than a visionary transformational leader.

Richard Nixon was a good manager in his early career and as Vice President. As President his leadership style expanded to that of transactional/ transformational leader.

This paper will expand on the literature reviewed. It will discuss how Nixon, with a torturous and somewhat authoritarian personality, carried out the functions of the highest office in the country.

Transactional/Transformational Leadership Theory

According to James MacGregor Burns, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Burns reasoned that leadership has characteristics of power but unlike plain power, it cannot be separated from follower interaction. "All leaders are actual or potential power holders, but not all

power holders are leaders" (Burns, 1978, p. 18). "Some define leadership as leaders making followers do what followers would not otherwise do, or as leaders making followers do what the leaders want them to do" (Burns, 1978, p. 19). This view is one sided, self limiting and often transitory. It serves the purposes of the power holder and not the group as a whole. Burns defines leadership as,

> "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. . . the essence of the leader-follower relation is in the interaction of persons with different levels of motivations and of power potential, including skill, in pursuit of a common or at least joint purpose (Burns, 1978, p. 19).

This communication manifests in two forms, Transactional style and Transformational style.

Transactional leadership is based on a transaction, or the exchange of something of value the leader possesses or controls that the follower wants in return for his/her services: a style based on basic reward and punishment. It is most effective when a clear chain of command is needed. If performance expectations are carried out in a normal

manner, leaders do not interfere. If expectations are exceeded, praise and reward (merit salary adjustments/ increased benefits) are given. Corrective action is applied for performance below expectations. When basic goals are satisfied, new higher order goals can be set.

> Transactional leaders have three characteristics. First, they work with team members to determine unequivocal goals and make certain workers get promised rewards for achieving those goals. Second, they exchange rewards (and promises of rewards) for worker effort. Third, they respond to the immediate self-interests of followers whose interests can be met while the job is being done. So, transactional leadership involves specified exchanges of effort for reward and a close relationship between goals and rewards. (Bryant, 2003, p.37)

Transactional leadership "requires a shrewd eye for opportunity, a good hand at bargaining, persuading, reciprocating" (Burns, 1978, p.169). This leadership style of directiveness and action orientation is often associated with the military and government leaders such as President Charles de Gaulle of France and President Lyndon Johnson when he was a legislative leader.

"Transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership, some of them derisory: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, preaching, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both." (Burns, 1978, p. 20)

Transformational leadership takes effect when the merits of transactional leadership are exhausted. Followers are now at a skill level where they can be raised morally and motivationally. Instead of motivating by reward and punishment, transformational leaders serve as mentors and coaches, inspiring followership. These leaders, who may be found at all levels of an organization, seek to improve

others. They inspire followers to use their unique skills and talents for a higher purpose. Transformational leaders "change the realities of [their] particular world to more nearly conform to [their] values and ideals" (Covey, 1992, p.285). To Burns, transforming leaders, generally within social movements, politics, or executives, connect with followers to elevate the values of the followers to a higher level. Bernard Bass (1985) modified Burns' concept of transforming leader to Transformational leadership, which focuses more on the character of the leader rather than the process in which the leader participates. For Bass, transformational leaders increase followers' confidence in themselves as well as their expectations of success. Today transformational leadership is the term most commonly used in discussions of leadership.

Politics With Restraint 1953-1961

From the beginning of his political career, Nixon assumed his transactional leadership role with enthusiasm. As Vice President under Eisenhower he energetically accepted the Eisenhower Administration policies. When a question of policy did arise Nixon followed the President's lead. According to Hatfield, because "Nixon could perform smoothly in the several roles that Eisenhower needed

filled, he was able to cultivate the image of an active and important Vice President" (Hatfield, 1997, p. 437).

Eisenhower delegated most disagreeable tasks to Nixon. This started when he was asked to contain Senator Joseph McCarthy's criticism of the administration for being too soft on communism. Nixon successfully contained the attacks by devising a strategy that led eventually to McCarthy being censured by his own colleagues.

Another immediate order of business for the Vice President was to help the administration defeat the Bricker Amendment. Republican Senator John Bricker, concerned that a U.S. President could compromise the sovereignty of the United States by entering into agreements with foreign nations, introduced a constitutional amendment to limit that possibility and to increase the influence of Congress in making foreign policy. Despite Republican support in Congress, Eisenhower felt that the amendment would seriously restrict the necessary powers of the President and make the nation "helpless in world affairs" (Hatfield, 1997, p. 437). The President, however, was unwilling to take the role of the party's spokesperson, sending Nixon and others to broker a compromise with Bricker. When the Senator would not comply, Nixon actively lobbied for a less

vigorous substitute, which passed without splitting the party.

Aside from managing special assignments, Nixon was the administration's political expert. He attended Cabinet meetings and contributed his insights on the importance of selling the Republican Party to the public. The Vice President was careful not to propose major objectives, but only suggested methods.

A Vice Presidential activity that Nixon did not foresee was temporarily assuming presidential responsibilities. Nixon provided the necessary leadership all the while maintaining Eisenhower's team approach, leading without appearing to lead during Eisenhower's three medical absences.

It appeared that Richard Nixon was an exemplary Vice-President and transactional leader in the Eisenhower administration. His performance in office helped to make the role of Vice President more prominent and to enhance its constitutional importance. By the time Eisenhower decided to run for reelection in 1956, however, he was looking for a running mate with leadership qualities that could carry the party into the next decade. Eisenhower did not see the mature leadership qualities in Nixon. To Eisenhower, the presidency belonged to statesmen not

partisan politicians. Nixon, understanding the President's motives and the tremendous potential for advancement in the Vice Presidency, went to Eisenhower stating his interest in being the President's running mate in the next election. In order to gain full party support, Eisenhower chose Nixon and again easily won the election.

Nixon expanded the duties and visibility of the Vice President. The Republican Party noticed his political astuteness and ability as an effective campaigner. Nixon used these skills to begin to building a stage for his greater ambitions. The Vice President continued to fulfill his obligations, but he was also setting his eyes on the next prize, the White House.

"Of the five presidential campaigns in which [he] was a direct participant, none affected {Richard Nixon] more personally than the campaign of 1960" (Nixon, 1990, p. 214). The Vice President's reputation was tied to the Eisenhower Administration, however, which his rival Governor Nelson Rockefeller and the Democrats easily attacked. Nixon had advocated a tax cut to stimulate the economy, but Eisenhower wanted a balanced budget. The Vice President also fought for increased defense expenditures

and an invasion of Cuba, which the President refused. Although Nixon was successful in winning the Republican nomination and "had traveled over 65,000 miles and visited all fifty states" (Nixon, 1990, p. 223), the election appeared to hinge on a weak Republican Party base, having to campaign in the shadow of Eisenhower's popular administration, and the television debates. Eisenhower's heart condition did not allow him to defend his Administration. His support of Nixon was in question: "[W]hen asked what major ideas [Nixon] had contributed as Vice President: [Eisenhower replied] 'If you give me a week, I might think of one'" (Nixon, 1990, p. 219).

The Nixon-Kennedy Debates, viewed for the first time on television, drew much more interest than radio. The public were swayed by the candidates appearance, rather than their knowledge of subject matter. Nixon also could not discuss classified administration matters that were introduced by Kennedy. In the end Kennedy's "victory margin was a mere half a percent. . ." (Greenstein, 2004, p.63). "Within a few days after the election [Nixon] was already thinking about what [he] would do next after [his] fourteen years in public life came to an end on January 20, 1961" (Nixon, 1990, p. 227).

The Private Citizen 1961-1967

Richard Nixon spent a large part of 1961 writing his book *Six Crises* and considering his next career move. He returned to California to run against Governor Edmund (Pat) Brown. This time, unlike the campaigns of 1946 and 1950, Nixon needed to master California issues of which he had little knowledge or interest. Many Californians speculated that the former Vice President's attraction to the governorship was a prelude for the Presidency. Brown, on the other hand, was a popular, approachable governor who understood the needs of his constituents. "Nixon lost by close to three hundred thousand votes out of six million" (Dallek, 2007, p. 29). In a post election news conference, Nixon said to what he felt was a hostile liberal press:

> Just think how much you're going to be missing. You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference, and it will be one which I have welcomed the opportunity to test wits with you (Black, 2007, p. 442).

Nixon then smiled, waved and left.

Richard Nixon never seriously considered leaving politics and public service. To Nixon, "politics was the only way he had ever been 'someone,' and though the risks of permanently losing that identity were considerable, he

could not give up a last chance to reach his life's goal" (Dallek, 2007, p. 32). When he felt emotional dejection Nixon would remember his mother telling him from her deathbed: "Richard, don't you give up. Don't let anybody tell you you are through" (Nixon, 1990, p. 289). From 1963 to 1968, Nixon calculated his activities to be within the time frame of the 1968 presidential nomination. He traveled abroad extensively visiting Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa meeting with world leaders and gaining an expertise in international concerns. At home Nixon also traveled throughout the fifty states becoming acquainted with and cultivating a rapport with as many Republican leaders as possible. "Nixon was extremely conversant with every conceivable domestic and foreign issue, but he seemed always more of a tactical than a conviction politician, except sometimes in matters of war and patriotism" (Black, 2007, p.486). The former Vice President "Matured in the sense of coming to grips with his fear of failure and his death wishes toward the father-figure Eisenhower" (Mazlish, 1970, p.103). He returned to become a successful Eastern corporation lawyer. Nixon stood back in the 1964 presidential elections when President Lyndon Johnson decisively defeated

ultraconservative Barry Goldwater. He regarded his decision as "the single most important step that he took on his return to power during [his years out of office]" (Johns, 1999, p.3). The defeat allowed Nixon to become the party's unifier. He campaigned tirelessly for the Republican Party and was rewarded with the party's success in the 1966 congressional elections, attracting increasing press attention and funding. Nixon sold himself with expertise in foreign affairs.

The former Vice President foresaw the Vietnam War as the main issue in the 1968 campaign. Johnson's commitment of over five hundred thousand troops by that year gave Nixon, who thrived on opposition, a central theme. As a private citizen, Nixon constantly criticized Johnson's Vietnam policy. "As a respected voice in foreign affairs and as arguably the Republican Party's leading spokesman on Vietnam, Nixon forced the Administration to acknowledge and respond to his rhetoric, which spurred Johnson to greater involvement in the war" (Johns. 1999, p.1). Nixon saw himself in a no lose situation with his stance on the war. If America would make concessions or withdraw, Nixon could blame Johnson for his failures. If the United States escalated and became victorious, Nixon could paint himself

as having had the solutions. Either way Nixon wanted to free himself from the 'loser' image.

On January 15, 1968, Nixon announced to his closest family and friends that he had decided to run again. Because of his tactics during the Johnson administration, the former Vice President was partially responsible for the Vietnam situation he inherited when he assumed the Presidency.

The National Stage

The 1968 election year looked good for Republicans. Despite Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory over Goldwater in 1964, the Vietnam War and urban unrest sharply reduced Johnson's popularity. Nixon assembled media consultants, among those H.R. "Bob" Haldeman, who helped him create a new image. Nixon became more statesman-like, mature and less combative. Television was used extensively to reach large audiences using question and answer formats. Nixon stood alone without a podium answering questions from an audience surrounding him in tiered bleachers. He also took pains not to antagonize media. Richard Nixon was preparing himself for a new role as President and transformational leader of his country. At the Republican Party Convention,

Nixon won the nomination on the first ballot, with Maryland Governor Spiro T. Agnew as his running mate.

In his acceptance speech, Nixon described the problems in America as he saw them. He blamed American failures in ending the war in Vietnam, the troubled economy, lawlessness, racial violence and hostilities against Americans abroad on the country's leadership. The Republican nominee accepted the challenge to provide new leadership for America.

The Republican Convention was orderly, compared to the tremendous disturbance of the Democratic gathering in Chicago. The Vietnam War had split the Democratic Party. Antiwar candidate Eugene McCarthy had gained enough support in the New Hampshire primary to cause Johnson's withdrawal from the race on March 31. Robert Kennedy then entered the race, winning the California primary in June and losing his life to an assassin's bullet the same night. Administration loyalists who nominated Hubert H. Humphrey as their candidate defeated antiwar demonstrators at the convention.

Nixon campaigned against Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey and third party candidate George Wallace on a vague platform promising an honorable peace in Vietnam with a secret plan to end the war. He also promised to restore

law and order in cities, crack down on illegal drugs, and end the military draft.

Richard Nixon's general election campaign started with a sizable lead over Humphrey. His refusal to debate Humphrey and his success in urging South Vietnam to refuse taking part in peace talks proposed by the administration helped him to a narrow victory. "The final returns of the 1968 presidential election showed that [Nixon] had defeated Humphrey by only 500,000 votes (Nixon, 1990, p. 351), a margin of less than one percent of the vote. Nixon also became the first President elected without his party winning either House of Congress since the nineteenth century.

On January 20, 1969, Richard Nixon became the 37th President of the United States. He had been in politics over twenty-two years as a Congressman, Vice President, and now President. Nixon had evolved from an intense anticommunist/opportunist to a transactional leader as Vice President, and now hoped to take on the role of a transformational leader and peacemaker.

In his First Inaugural Address, Nixon stated, "The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker" (Nixon, 1969, para. 9). This statement described the kind of leader the new president envisioned

himself becoming. In his address, Nixon discussed the promise of equality for all races, his belief in today's youth, and the beauty of celebrating ". . .the basic things- such as goodness, decency, love, kindness" (Nixon, 1969, para. 23).

Domestic Policy

Despite critics' expectations that Nixon would have a "do nothing" presidency in regards to domestic affairs, the President had hopes to transfer the country's wealth from conflicts abroad to the urgent needs at home. His interest in politics was heavily influenced by the important reforms in welfare policy, civil rights, the environment, and law enforcement.

After taking office, Nixon proposed a full restructuring of the government. He felt that the swollen and sluggish federal bureaucracy, especially prevalent since the Franklin Roosevelt era, buried creative entrepreneurship under mountains of red tape and promoted dependence and handouts. He called his new system "New Federalism," which diverted money and power away from the federal government and directed it toward the states.

On the topic of civil rights, Nixon opposed school busing. Nixon's calculated attempt to slow school

desegregation was manifest in his public policy. The President stated: "[t]ransportation of pupils beyond normal geographic school zones for the purpose of achieving racial balance will not be required" (McAndrews, 1998, p.190). HEW Secretary Leon Panetta denounced the speech's "'perpetuation' of segregation and 'slick rationalization for retreat'" (McAndrews, 1998, 190). This was a sharp rebuke, and not unwarranted. The Southern Strategy, showing roots in the 1940's and popularized by Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips in his 1969 book *The emerging Republican majority* referred to methods used to win elections in the South by exploiting racial anxiety among white voters, using race as a wedge issue. Nixon supported this strategy which, with the help of Strom Thurmond, helped to secure his nomination and win the election in 1968. Viewed as regressive by many, it targeted disenfranchised whites by highlighting racially charged issues like bussing and desegregation. Many felt the Republican Party was moving away from the center, with Nixon leading the way. Despite this focus, the percentage of all-black schools during the Nixon Administration saw a drastic reduction.

Nixon felt pressure from environmental and consumer groups

and proposed legislation that created the Department of Natural Resources, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Clean Air Act of 1970 was perhaps one of the most significant pieces of environmental legislation ever passed ("Richard M. Nixon", 2008, article-214055, p. 5).

Foreign Affairs

"On the administration's third day in office [National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger] began implementing Nixon's plan to ensure White House dominance of foreign policy" (Dallek, 2007, p. 100). President Nixon organized the White House to protect his energy, time, and to protect against an inhospitable political environment. His mode of operation was secret, often without the permission or knowledge of the State Department. The President's main operative was Henry Kissinger, whose influence over foreign policy was possibly greater than any presidential advisor in history. Routine matters and administrative business were left to chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, council to the President, John Erlichman, and White House liaison, Charles Colson.

In his First Inaugural Address, the President redefined the American role in the world by stating: "After a period of confrontation, we are entering an era of negotiation (Nixon, 1969, para. 52). Nixon, acting as a change agent/transformational leader, started a withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Nixon felt that an initial withdrawal would gain public favor, allowing the U.S. to achieve an honorable end to the Vietnam War. Only with an end to the war would Nixon be free to give proper attention to other great international challenges. Priorities that the President and Kissinger identified were reducing tensions with the Soviet Union, establishing diplomatic ties with China, and promoting Middle East peace talks.

On July 25, 1969, during a brief stay in Guam, the President formally gave notice that the United States would henceforth support democratic nations by providing them financial and military aid, but not troops. The announcement, which was the basis of Nixon's foreign policy, became known as the Nixon Doctrine. It was also part of the President's promised secret means of winning the war. Nixon introduced what would be called "Vietnamization," supporting South Vietnam with money and

equipment while gradually withdrawing American soldiers from combat. When the President called for a cease-fire and a unilateral withdrawal of American troops, North Vietnam refused to negotiate. They intended to win the war. The failure of negotiating with Hanoi frustrated Nixon who saw it as a setback in ending the war before the 1972 elections.

To Nixon Vietnam "overshadowed everything else, all the time, in every discussion, in every opportunity, in every problem" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 120). Nixon had promised peace with honor during the election campaign and that was what he was going to deliver.

Nixon knew his reelection depended on ending the Vietnam dilemma. He and Kissinger also knew the damage the war had done to the United States internationally as well as at home. The Soviets were watching with pleasure as a superpower was failing to crush the small developing North Vietnam. At the same time they were advancing their nuclear weapon capabilities and expanding their military.

Nixon was very reluctant to become involved in Middle East negotiations. "For Nixon and Kissinger, the Middle East was like a jigsaw puzzle with missing and misshapen pieces" (Dallek, 2007, p. 171). The State Department was interested in the administration pursuing a more assertive

Middle East policy while Nixon felt more attention was needed in Vietnam. Nixon needed to appease the State Department, but it also made him less inclined to rely on the department to manage Middle East strategy. Nixon followed the State Department persistence to hold Four Power talks that included proposals for Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-Egyptian settlements. Israeli Prime Minister "Golda Meir called it 'appeasement of the Arabs' and 'the gravest blows to Israel's most vital interests'" (Dallek, 2007, p. 179).

Richard Nixon believed that "[l]ife for everyone is a series of crises" (Mazlish, 1973, p. 88). Leaders are able to act in crises and ". . .a leader without crisis is almost a contradiction in terms" (Mazlish, 1973, p. 92). The President felt that all great leaders thrive on challenge and are best when the going is hardest. He viewed the Vietnam conflict, and the Middle East difficulties as exhausting, but at the same time exhilarating.

Nixon's crisis leadership skills were even further challenged when the Soviet Union threatened to surpass the U.S. and Great Britain in nuclear capabilities. In 1963, President Kennedy signed an agreement with the Soviets and England to limit atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons.

This was the only treaty to date. In November 1969, Nixon proposed to the Soviet Union a fixed value standard. Each was to possess enough arms to guarantee the destruction of the other, thus preventing either from starting war. After a long deadlock, the first results of SALT I came in May 1971 with signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and certain standards with respect to limitations of strategic offensive arms. This helped to improve cooperation between the United States and the Soviets.

Nixon was very interested in continuing talks with the Soviet Union and beginning dialogue with China. He established lines of secret communication between the U.S. and China through secret intermediaries in Romania and Pakistan known only to Kissinger and himself.

He felt this secrecy was necessary because Congress wanted the Vietnam issue settled before embarking on relations with China. The conflict with Vietnam, which he had hoped to be resolved within the first six months of his presidency, however, dragged on. Instead of winding down, the war in Indochina was escalating into Laos and Cambodia. Nixon, who was convinced that negotiations should always be carried out from a position of strength, approved B-52 raids against northern Laos and their sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia. Domestic pressures for

troop reduction and Cabinet member disapproval of expanding the war outside of Vietnam convinced the President to deliver a progress toward peace address to the nation on April 20, 1970. In the address, Nixon credited his program of Vietnamization as succeeding, despite problems with enemy activity in Laos and Cambodia. Such activity, Nixon said, required an aggressive military response. In order to appease anti-war protesters, Nixon promised another troop withdrawal of 150,000 over the next twelve months. With his approval rating increase from fifty-five percent to sixty-two percent after the April 20 speech, Nixon was more confident to complete his next move.

In early April, Nixon met secretly with Admiral John McCain, father of Senator John McCain of Arizona, who reinforced the President's belief that if North Vietnamese forces were not stopped they would soon take Cambodia's capitol Phnom Penh and continue further. The President felt that if the U.S. forces joined with the South Vietnamese army, the Communists could be driven out of Cambodia. On April 26, Nixon authorized an attack on enemy forces in Cambodia against the advice of his entire White House organization. Defense Secretary Laird had predicted that the Cambodia operation would not be decisive and Hanoi would replace its losses. The Secretary proved to be

correct. The invasion not only failed to inspire confidence in Vietnamization, it emphasized Nixon's ineffectiveness during periods of stress. Within a two-month period the United States and South Vietnamese armed forces withdrew, allowing North Vietnam to take back previously lost areas and widen their control of northeast Cambodia.

Throughout the ordeal, Nixon released his stress in bizarre behavior. According to Kissinger, "[t]here was no true Nixon" (Dallek, 2007, p. 206). "There was a reflective, philosophical, stoical Nixon; and there was an impetuous, impulsive, and erratic one" (Dallek, 2007, p. 206). Nixon viewed the Cambodian episode as a test of his manhood and resilience to stress.

"Nixon's [highest priority] in the aftermath of Cambodia was not to consolidate or expand alleged gains against the Communists, but to quiet dissent in the United States and repel congressional attacks on executive power" (Dallek, 2007, p. 207). The President, however, experienced another nightmare as a result of the Cambodian failure, when Ohio National Guard troops opened fire at students during a war protest on the Kent State University campus, killing four and wounding nine on May 4, 1970. This triggered other protests around the country. Nixon

tried to make peace with himself by visiting student protesters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial on the early morning of May 8. He tried to find a common bond with the crowd through which he could express his concerns. Instead, the President digressed to subjects that had nothing to do with concerns about the war and direction of American foreign policies. Nixon wanted to reach out and express his feelings, but could not. Richard Nixon was too preoccupied with internal turmoil to listen.

By late 1970, Richard Nixon had faced overwhelming problems that tested him physically and emotionally. Despite his resolve to end the Vietnam War, the war raged on. Nixon felt that unless he could improve his public standing by convincing voters that he was ending the war, his 1972 re-election would be doubtful. The President instructed his White House staff to make efforts to present the administration in a positive way. Nixon wanted to be remembered as a peacemaker, rescuing the world from communist tyranny.

By 1971, Nixon was not only distrustful of the media; he began to question the allegiances of his aids. The President instructed his staff to make memos of their conversations. Later Nixon aides Haldeman and Alexander Butterfield helped the President install a taping system

that would secretly record office and telephone conversations in various White House locations and at Camp David. In this way, Nixon would have instant and accurate information for historical purposes and to hold people accountable for what they said. The President could not anticipate the way that his tapes would make history.

As Nixon's tapes indicate, the years 1971-1972 were dominated with the President's preoccupation with being re-elected and establishing "a foreign policy record advancing international peace that would be the envy of all future presidents" (Dallek, 2007, p. 247).

As a presidential candidate in 1967, Nixon wrote in an article in *States Foreign Affairs*, "Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside of the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 6). The President said, "the mark of a leader 'is whether he can give history a nudge'" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 6).

Richard Nixon had the intelligence, the curiosity, backed by knowledge of history, to be able to take advantage of changing world situations. He believed that through cooperation among nations the suffering and expense of wars could be prevented; that countries could someday

work together for the good of all. Nixon was always firmly against communism, but had come to an understanding that maintaining a balance in the world was more important than ideological struggles with adversaries. Unlike Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who had publicly brushed past Chou En-lai's offered hand at the 1954 Geneva Conference, Nixon, by 1969 was ready for dialogue.

Hostilities that broke out in mid 1969 between Chinese and Soviet troops in Northeast China gave Nixon a chance to play one country against the other. The President knew that he had to make concessions to show U.S. sincerity in normalizing relations. By recommendation of the National Security Council and the State Department, Nixon announced in April 1971 the lifting of twenty-year travel and trade restrictions with China.

A few conservatives sensed that Nixon was yielding to communism. The President, however, felt ". . .that opening to China was useful against the Soviets and would help in Vietnam" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 173). Chairman Mao Tse-tung, anxious about improving Soviet/U.S. relations and unsure of a possible growing threat from Japan, invited a U.S. table tennis team which was playing in Japan to come to China. "As Mao subsequently described his decision, the small ping-pong ball could be used to move the large ball of the

earth" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 178). Premier Chou En-Lai received the team, signifying that Nixon's overtures had been acknowledged. The President in turn invited the Chinese table tennis team to the United States.

Nixon and Kissinger's back channel secret diplomacy, keeping the State Department and most of Nixon's own advisors uninformed caused unnecessary delays and confusion in serious negotiations, "[Nixon] needed crisis to feel alive" (Barber, 1992, p.142). Fortunately, at the end of April 1971, Chou En-Lai responded to the Presidents' five-month-old secret messages with a personal invitation from Chairman Mao for Nixon to visit China. Progress for restored relations continued. The United States withdrew its opposition to China joining the United Nations, but resisted the expulsion of Taiwan. On July 15, 1971, Nixon spoke to a national audience about his forthcoming visit to China the next year.

"As [Nixon] told Kissinger, 'Nations must have great ideas or they cease to be great'" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 10). Richard Nixon's great idea was to become a world statesman and build permanent world peace. The President had the insight and understanding to do so as he met and clasped hands for the first time with Premier Chou En-Lai on February 17, 1972. It was the first step in formally

normalizing relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

As with most foreign affairs negotiations, Nixon insisted that talks between the Chinese leaders and the American President be shrouded in secrecy. Three hours after his arrival, Nixon was summoned for a short meeting with Chairman Mao. Nixon then traveled throughout China. At the conclusion, both governments issued the Shanghai Communiqué, a basis for Sino-American relations that was followed for many years. In the official communiqué, both nations pledged to work toward full normalization of diplomatic relations. Both pledged, "[t]here is one China. . .and Taiwan is part of China" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 259). This assurance continues today, as President George W. Bush opposes independence for Taiwan.

Nixon's request for Chinese assistance with a peaceful withdrawal of Americans from Vietnam was turned down. The President's anxiety regarding leaving South Vietnam before the 1972 elections with a reasonable chance for their survival was still not assured. Nixon, however, did return from China with an outpouring of praise from both political parties as well as the nation.

The Soviet Union, which had warned Nixon in 1969 that

". . .it would be a 'very grave miscalculation' if 'someone' in the United States were tempted to profit from the rift between China and the Soviet Union at the latter's expense" (MacMillan, 2007, p. 289), now became more amenable to improved relations with the United States. In May 1972 Nixon paid a visit to Moscow to negotiate and sign ten formal agreements, the most important being the Nuclear-Arms Limitation Treaty, or SALT I. Nixon had hopes for a joint U.S.S.R. and U.S. space venture in 1975.

The Moscow Summit produced a negotiated secret grain deal as well as an agreement for a peaceful resolution of conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, which ultimately did not materialize. The final product of Nixon's détente leadership was a conference in Helsinki. The focus was to be reduction of Cold War risks, tensions and costs in Europe. Nixon and Kissinger were pessimistic that the conference would be successful whereas Europeans were much more optimistic. Between July 3, 1973 and August 1, 1975 members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact discussed the future security of Europe. The Helsinki Accords, signed in August 1975 were nonbinding, lacked treaty status, and gave the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe legitimate standing as equals with the democratic regimes in the West, but they also addressed human rights. These Accords would be

referenced by many of the "New thinkers" in the Soviet Union, such as Gorbachev, and it can be debated that they were a significant catalyst in the fall of communism.

Nixon's successes with the communist world and the military sophistication he gained from the trials of Vietnam provided him an opportunity to modernize the American military. The President ended the draft and increased the benefits of an all-volunteer army.

Since the beginning of his presidency, Nixon had been searching for a way to get the United States out of Vietnam. He did not want to be accused of abandoning South Vietnam, but could not convince the North Vietnamese to negotiate. Nixon tried to use the improved relations with China and the Soviet Union to pressure the North. The President used threats, periodic bombing and signs of personal irrational behavior to bring the North to a settlement. Nothing worked. When Nixon used bombing operations, positive results were short lasting and in the end the communists occupied more territory. Clearly, North Vietnam was in control of the war, waiting for the right time to make a peace proposal.

Throughout the ordeal, Nixon was not honest with the American people. Publicly, the President continued to stress that the combination of negotiation and his program

of training the South Vietnamese to take over the responsibilities for their own country were working. In October 1972, counting on Nixon to settle before the Presidential election, Hanoi proposed an agreement which was quickly accepted by Kissinger. When the South objected the North began broadcasting provisions that both Nixon and Kissinger wanted to keep secret, especially with elections less than one month away. In late October Kissinger announced, "Peace is at hand" (Nixon, 2007, p. 6) without giving details. After the election, Nixon persuaded South Vietnamese President Thieu to participate in a settlement. On January 27, 1973 Nixon ended U.S. participation in the Vietnam War, achieving his "indispensability as a peacemaker" (Dallek, 2007, p. 578).

From the Pinnacle Down 1972-1994

Until his re-election on January 20, 1973, Richard Nixon's belief that "hard effort could bring success" (Barber, 1992, p. 141) rang true. Nixon was a good manager as Vice President in the Eisenhower administration and effective change agent/ transformational leader in his first term as President. Nixon's character was intact.

The President was renominated in 1972. He was invigorated by his China and Soviet Union successes and at

the peak of his popularity. Democratic candidate George McGovern, on the other hand, was proposing policies that "placed him far to the left of most of the electorate" (Greenstein, 2004, p.103). "After the Democrats had settled on McGovern, the polls suggested Nixon was unbeatable"(Dallek, 2007, p.408). Nixon, however, didn't trust the polls, fearing that election results could oust him from the presidency. The President's anxieties set in motion illegal activities by members of the Committee to Reelect the President.

Richard Nixon defeated his Democratic challenger by one of the largest majorities in the history of American Presidential elections. *Time Magazine* made him 'Man of the Year" in its January 1973 issue. Nixon's ambitions were to continue détente with the Soviet Union and come to settlements in the Middle East. Watergate changed the Presidents' plans. What started out as ". . .a minor scandal burgeoned into a momentous catastrophe" (Aiken, 1996, p.5) ending in President Nixon's resignation in disgrace.

Disgrace of Presidential Resignation

Less than a month after Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union, five men connected to the President's campaign

committee and hired by some of Nixon's closest advisors were arrested while burglarizing and installing hidden microphones in the Democratic campaign office of the Watergate building. As the news spread, connecting the burglars to the Nixon White House, aides began to treat the incident as a public relations disaster. A full cover up was the means chosen to deal with the situation instead of objectivity. The White House and Nixon's campaign committee shredded documents and evaded or refused to truthfully answer reporters questions, thus attempting to dispel a larger picture of potential corruption.

Even though he was at the height of his popularity and polls were showing he was unbeatable, Nixon felt he had to take steps to assure his presidency before it was too late. Nixon could not allow power to go beyond his control, and he obstructed the Federal Bureau of Investigation from examining payments made to indicted burglars to keep them quiet.

Investigators, however, began to unravel crimes committed before and after the break-in. Testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities revealed that the President directed White House council John Dean to oversee the cover-up to conceal the Administration's involvement. White House aid Alexander

Butterfield revealed that extensive tape recordings existed of conversations held in Nixon's offices.

When special prosecutor Archibald Cox asked for the tapes to be released, Nixon offered transcripts instead. When Cox rejected the offer, Nixon fired him. Other high officials in his administration resigned rather than comply with the order to fire Cox. "Nixon's 'credibility and moral authority' was causing an 'agonizing inch by inch. . .attrition' of his presidential power" (Dallek, 2007, p. 567). To compound his problems, Vice-President Agnew resigned amidst charges of wrongdoing as governor of Maryland. Gerald R. Ford, a popular congressman from Michigan was selected to succeed Agnew. In March 1974, a federal grand jury named Richard Nixon as an unindicted co-conspirator in a conspiracy to obstruct justice in the Watergate investigation. Leon Jaworski, who replaced Cox as special Watergate prosecutor, continued to demand the surrender of White House tapes as the House Judiciary Committee began to build an impeachment case against the President.

Richard Nixon tried to re-establish his presidential authority by taking trips to the Middle East and Soviet Union in the spring and summer of 1974. Nixon tried to assist Israel with emerging aid when Egypt and Syria

attacked and tried to take back land Israel had seized in the six-day war of 1967. Nixon's efforts were met with an embargo on oil shipments to the United States from the Middle East.

The President was so distracted by Watergate that he left Kissinger in charge of shuttle diplomacy going from one capitol to the other seeking agreements. In the Soviet Union, SALT II negotiations did not go well. Brezhnev and Gromyko were angry about being left out in the latest Middle East talks. "Conservative Republicans believed that any arms agreement coming out of the next summit would be aimed less at serving the nation's security than saving Nixon's presidency" (Dallek, 2007, p. 569). The obstacles that Nixon faced made significant advances for a successful summit impossible.

Nixon tried to hold on to his lifelong philosophy of not giving up to defeat. Watergate, however, closed in on him upon his return home. One recording that the President finally submitted was the "smoking gun": the recording of the President ordering the FBI to stop the investigation of the Watergate break-in (Dallek, 2007, p. 601). With this recording, President Nixon lost all political support as the Judiciary Committee recommended impeachment to the full House of Representatives. The Nixon presidency was over.

Nixon announced his resignation on August 8, 1974, to take effect at noon the next day.

Henry Kissinger said of Nixon: "[h]e felt toward him 'a great tenderness-for the tremendous struggle he had fought within his complex personality, for his vulnerability, and for his great aspirations defeated in the end by weakness of character'" (Dallek, 2007, p. 608-609).

> On Sunday, September 8, President Ford went on television and radio, explained that he wished to put Watergate behind the country and the terrible division it had created, and read his proclamation of a 'full, free, and absolute pardon' for Nixon (Black, 2007, p. 990.).

Nixon's agreed statement said in part that he hoped Ford's "'compassionate act' would ease 'the burden of Watergate'" (Black, 2007, p. 990). Nixon never acknowledged wrongdoing. "For him surrender is suicide, an admission of guilt and weakness" (Renshon, 1975, p. 446).

Richard Nixon kept a low profile in retirement, trying to rehabilitate his image. He wrote many books, most on foreign policy, drawing scholars' attention, but doing little to affect policy. The President died in 1994,

hoping that history would bestow to him what Nixon felt was the greatest honor: the title of Peacemaker.

Implications for Leadership

What will Richard Nixon's legacy teach us about leadership? Nixon was a complicated leader, having been raised in a family where crisis seemed ever present. His familiarity with crisis gave Richard a base upon which to operate in society and, more specifically, in his chosen field of politics. Nixon rose rapidly through the political ranks by using or creating crises that he could then solve. In Nixon's favor was the fact that he had the opportunity to learn several roles in government before taking the nation's highest political office.

By the time he became Vice President, Richard Nixon was the administration's general political expert, having the most thorough knowledge of governmental process. As second-in-command under President Eisenhower, Nixon skillfully fulfilled the transactional leadership roles that he was given. When Eisenhower was hospitalized, the Vice President, observed proper protocol by presiding over Cabinet meetings from the Vice President's chair and conducted business from his office in the Capitol. Nixon

made efforts to provide leadership without appearing to lead.

By the time he became President, Nixon had formulated a "clear vision and direction" as described by Steven Covey (1991, p. 69). He was a transformational leader/ change agent who had a vision that the international community could live in peace. The president used his foreign affairs expertise to try to bring a balance of power between nations.

President Nixon's personal life consisted of battles within himself. The "compulsive tendency to press an advantage" (Chesen, 1973, p. 123) using illegal, and unconstitutional means to assure his presidency in 1972, cost Nixon the presidency. Watergate became the sobering endpoint of the President's lifelong struggle with his complex personality. Nixon's noble ambitions were defeated by weakness of character.

Implications For My Understanding of Leadership

Richard Nixon's leadership style added a twist to my understanding of transformational leadership. Prior to this study I understood Nixon to be a change agent, sometimes thought of as a negative form of a transformational leader. In his first term, however, Nixon

had a vision and a sense of urgency for international cooperation to prevent another war, by initiating ambitious positive relations with the Soviets, China, and also achieving significant domestic reforms. Nixon's love for his country and the positive impact of his visionary outcomes, however, were undermined by his shortcomings. Nixon secretly manipulated his powers and disregarded laws, especially in his second term in office. He prolonged the Vietnam War to avoid the inevitable loss in his term in office, thus allowing pain and suffering of those connected with the conflict to continue. The President dismissed Watergate as "a third-rate burglary" (Dallek, 2007, p. 622) and never acknowledged his harmful and illegal actions. In his second term in office, when his country needed him to follow through on a positive course domestically and internationally, Richard Nixon failed. Leaders must have strong convictions, be consistent and admit when they are wrong. President Nixon was a transformational leader, but his character flaws, including a lack of ethics, gave him a place in history as one of the most notorious presidents in American history.

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